

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 STR-07
ACDA-12 AGRE-00 /136 W
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R 251852Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0976
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BONN
USLO PEKING
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 08960

USSALTTWO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV ADDRESSES THE OPENING SESSION OF THE
KOMSOMOL CONGRESS

SUMMARY: THE 18TH KOMSOMOL CONGRESS GOT UNDERWAY APRIL 25
WITH A MAJOR ADDRESS BY BREZHNEV. MOST SIGNIFICANT WERE
HIS EXTENSIVE REMARKS ON FOREIGN POLICY, REPORTED SEPTTEL.
ON DOMESTIC MATTERS, HE UNDERScoreD THE ECONOMIC
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IMPORTANCE OF WESTERN SIBERIA AND PARTICULARLY TYUMEN',
AND WAS BLUNT IN DESCRIBING SHORTCOMINGS IN RETAIL TRADE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES. HE ALSO HAD SHARP WORDS ABOUT A
NUMBER OF NEGATIVE ATTITUDES FOUND AMONG SOVIET YOUTH.
DVERALL, HOWEVER, HIS SPEECH WAS UPBEAT, HIS AUDI-
ENCE ENTHUSIASTIC; AND HIS SPEAKING PERFORMANCE REASONABLY
GOOD FOR BREZHNEV. KIRILENKO TURNED UP FOR THE EVENT;

ANDROPOV CONTINUES TO BE ABSENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATURE OF THE EVENT: THE APRIL 25 OPENING OF THE 18TH KOMSOMOL CONGRESS AT THE KREMLIN'S PALACE OF CONGRESSES, AS SHOWN ON TV COVERAGE, WAS A WELL ORCHESTRATED EVENT, FILLED WITH CHANTS OF "LENIN, PARTY, KOMSOMOL", ENDLESS CLAPPING, AND WAVING OF COLORED HANDKERCHIEVES IN RESPONSE TO SIGNALS PROVIDED BY CHEER LEADERS" IN THE AISLES AND KOMSOMOL FIRST SECRETARY PASTRIKHOV, WHO CHAIRED THE OPENING SESSION.

2. BREZHNEV'S SPEECH: THE DOMINANT EVENT OF THE SESSION WAS A PREVIOUSLY UNANNOUNCED HOUR-AND-TWENTY MINUTE ADDRESS BY BREZHNEV, WHICH INCLUDED A MAJOR STATEMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY (REPORTED SEPTEL). BREZHNEV DEVOTED THE FIRST TWO-THIRDS OF HIS REMARKS (WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS THE FULL TEXT) TO THE KOMSOMOL AND ITS ROLE IN CURRENT ECONOMIC PROGRAMS. THE FOLLOWING POINTS STRUCK US AS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY:

-- BREZHNEV PAID FAR GREATER ATTENTION TO WESTERN SIBERIA'S ROLE IN THE SOVIET ECONOMY THAN WAS COMMON PRIOR TO HIS TRIP THERE; HE DEVOTED SOME TEN MINUTES TO SIBERIA, IN PARTICULAR PRAISING TYUMEN' FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION OF ALMOST HALF OF THE COUNTRY'S ENERGY AND EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN SIBERIA;
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-- REFERRING TO THE DIFFICULT CONDITIONS IN SIBERIA, BREZHNEV CALLED UPON THE KOMSOMOL TO CONTINUE ITS ROLE IN SENDING YOUNG PEOPLE OUT TO BUILD UP THE COUNTRY AND STEEL THEMSELVES IN THE PROCESS; CLEARLY INDICATING INCREASED PRIORITY FOR TYUMEN', HE SPECIFICALLY CALLED FOR MORE YOUNG SPECIALISTS TO BE SENT (A BETTER WORD PROBABLY WOULD BE "DIVERTED") TO THAT AREA;

-- HE COVERED OTHER ECONOMIC THEMES IN FAIRLY PREDICTABLE TERMS, PLUGGING THE NEED FOR GREATER ECONOMIC RATIONALITY (AND ONCE AGAIN CALLING FOR EMULATION OF THE "SHCHEKIN METHOD" OF REDUCING WORKFORCE) AND FOR MODERNIZATION OF AGRICULTURE;

-- HE WAS PARTICULARLY STERN IN DISCUSSING SHORTCOMINGS IN RETAIL TRADE AND CONSUMER SERVICES, NOTING THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THESE SECTORS FOR WORKER MORALE AND DECLARING WITH EMPHASIS THAT THESE SECTORS MUST BE PUT INTO ORDER;

-- HE WAS ALSO BLUNT CONCERNING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF YOUTH, INCLUDING CYNICISM, INDIFFERENCE, PETTY BOURGEOIS REGARD FOR MATERIAL WEALTH, AND KOMSOMOL

LEADERS WHO DO LITTLE MORE THAN MECHANICALLY REPEAT WRITTEN TRUTHS;

-- IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT BREZHNEV GOT A SURPRISINGLY ENTHUSIASTIC BURST OF APPLAUSE WHEN HE NOTED THAT HIS SIBERIAN TRIP REVEALED THE USSR'S BORDERS TO BE WELL PROTECTED AND IN TRUSTWORTHY HANDS (WHILE MOST OF THE KBG BORDER TROOPS PRESUMABLY ARE KOMSOMOL MEMBERS, BREZHNEV'S APPEAL TO PATRIOTISM AND DEFENSE OF THE MOTHERLAND SEEMED TO STRIKE A GENUINELY RESPONSIVE CHORD IN THE YOUNG AND NOT SO YOUNG AT THE MEETING);
-- IN WHAT STRUCK US AS HIS BEST MOMENT IN THE SPEECH, AFTER LISTING THE CHALLENGES FACING THE KOMSOMOL HE LIFTED HIS EYES FROM THE TEXT AND SAID "THERE ARE 30 MILLION OF
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YOU, WHAT A GREAT FORCE THIS IS*" IMPLYING NO CHALLENGE COULD BE TOO GREAT FOR SUCH A FORCE; THE ANSWERING APPLAUSE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 08960

USSALTTWO

WAS DEAFENING.

3. BREZHNEV'S PERFORMANCE: BREZHNEV'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE WAS NORMAL, SUGGESTING THAT HE IS HOLDING UP REASONABLY WELL UNDER A HEAVY SCHEDULE (ON APRIL 24 HE RECEIVED CHAIRMAN OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PUBLISHING HOUSE "PERGAMAN PRESS", AND ATTENDED A GALA SPORTS SHOW THAT EVENING). HIS DELIVERY WAS, FOR HIM, FAIRLY GOOD:
-- HE GOT THROUGH THE 80-MINUTE ADDRESS WITH NO MAJOR, EM-
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BARRASSING FLUFFS;
-- HE READ VERY SLOWLY AND CONSISTANTLY HAD TROUBLE WITH CERTAIN WORDS SUCH AS "NARODNAYA" AND "MEZHDUNARODOE;" HE REPEATED A NUMBER OF OTHER WORDS TO GET ALL THE SYLLABLES IN, ALTHOUGH HIS SELF-IMPOSED RULE SEEMED TO BE THAT IF HE COULDN'T GET THE WORD RIGHT ON THE SECOND TRY, HE WOULD MOVE ON'
-- HIS ENERGY LEVEL AND CONCENTRATION SEEMED REASONABLY GOOD, PARTICULARLY WHEN HE CAME TO THE FOREIGN POLICY SECTION AT THE END OF THE SPEECH.

4. LEADERSHIP INDICATORS: KIRILENKO TURNED UP FOR THE MEETING, IN HIS FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE SINCE MARCH 30. ANDROPOV WAS ABSENT. ROMANOV WAS THE ONLY NON-MOSCOW-BASED CPSU LEADER ON THE DAIS (ROMANOV ALSO ACCOMPANIED BREZHNEV TO THE APRIL 24 EVENING SPORTS SHOW). THE ORDER OF LEADERSHIP ENTRY INTO THE HALL WAS BREZHNEV, KOSYGIN, SUSLOV AND KIRILENKO. THE LEADERSHIP SEATING ORDER WAS UNEXCEPTIONABLE.
TOON

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Message Attributes

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